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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001177

SIPDIS

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AFR/SA FLEURET; DCHA/OFDA FOR HALDRAST-SANCHEZ; DCHA/FFP
FOR LANDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2014

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SUBJECT: SPURRING SADC ENGAGEMENT ON ZIMBABWE: EC RESPONSE

REF: STATE 53747

Classified By: PRMOFF MARC MEZNAR. REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. The European Commission (EC) is skeptical that pressure through SADC or any other channel can reverse the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. The members of SADC have disparate agendas and circumstances that hinder them from coming together forcefully on Zimbabwe. Although official development assistance to Zimbabwe has been frozen, the EC has stepped up its humanitarian efforts to respond to the food, health and education needs of the Zimbabwean people. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On 3/18, PRMOFF delivered reftel talking points to DG DEV Zimbabwe Desk officer Joan Pijuan regarding SADC engagement to address the deteriorating humanitarian and political situation in Zimbabwe. As noted during DAS Pamela Bridgewater's discussions about Zimbabwe with senior EU officials on 3/10 (septel), the EC is skeptical that any leverage on the GoZ will be effective. Pijuan said that the EU had clear benchmarks with regard to democracy and governance issues, but did not want to seem to be imposing them from the outside. Ideally, he felt that SADC, for its own sake, should convey to Mugabe the importance of reform. However, Pijuan thought it was unlikely this would happen because many of Zimbabwe's neighbors have no real incentive to pressure Mugabe. Pijuan stated that the key player, South Africa, has its own agenda and will only give a token push when necessary to satisfy western concerns. Namibia shares the land reform issues as Zimbabwe and cannot be forward leaning. Other neighboring states are worse off economically, so the situation in Zimbabwe does not seem dire by comparison. In fact, Pijuan said that some neighbors benefited economically from the trouble in Zimbabwe and might prefer to continue reaping advantages from these problems. Even the spillover of migrant laborers was welcomed, to a degree, as professional and educated classes were among those leaving Zimbabwe.

¶3. (C) Pijuan concluded that Mugabe, far from feeling isolated, actually has become more arrogant and disdainful of international pressure. Pijuan signaled two worrying developments vis-a-vis the international community: the withdrawal of Zimbabwe's request for UNDP to assist with elections and the decision to stop accepting food aid from WFP. According to Pijuan, Mugabe will not show any pretense of conducting "fair and free" elections. He said the government has food stocks available which it will freely distribute in the run-up to the election for political gain. Pijuan concluded his analysis by saying that "perhaps doing nothing is the best plan. The international community should monitor and be ready, but should not push too much. Let Zimbabwe find its own way."

¶4. (SBU) Pijuan gave an overview of current EC assistance to Zimbabwe. He noted that despite the freezing of 9th European Development Fund (EDF), the EC

has actually reinforced its office in Harare since other funding sources are being utilized to assist vulnerable people. Approximately 89 million euros will be available this year, as follows:

-- 25 million euros in remaining funds from the 6th through 8th EDFs administered by DG DEV: All development assistance in the pipeline has been reprogrammed to meet the current humanitarian needs, mainly in the areas of health and education. Although the assistance programs had been mainly in these same sectors, they are now being applied to meet the direct needs of the population (such as purchasing medicine) instead of supporting the institutional structures.

-- 19 million euros from envelope B of the 9th EDF. The B envelope can be used for unforeseen emergencies and does not require a signed agreement with the GoZ (as does the A envelope, which consists of 127 million euros in frozen funds).

-- 25 million euros for humanitarian work: ECHO aims to meet pockets of hunger through school feeding, nutritional surveillance, agricultural rehabilitation, water and sanitation, therapeutic feeding and logistical support for distribution. An initial funding decision for 15 million euros will be forthcoming (with funds likely to go to UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, ICRC and WHO). ECHO expects that later in the year additional funds will be made available to match their 2003 funding level of 25 million euros.

-- 20 million euros for food aid administered by EuropeAid: These funds are being used to meet food needs through May 2004. (Note. This amount is half the total allocated in 2003. Of the combined 2003-2004 amount, 52 million euros will be channeled through WFP and the remaining 8 million euros through NGOs. End Note.)

FOSTER